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DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EUR/SE, EUR/PD, NEA/PD, DRL
JCS PASS J-5/CDR S. WRIGHT

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: OPRC KMDR TU

SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2007

In Today's Papers

Turkey Bombs More PKK Targets

All papers report on the statement from the Turkish General Staff (TGS), which confirms that Turkish warplanes bombed PKK targets in northern Iraq on Wednesday. According to the statement, Turkish military fighter jets successfully hit PKK targets during the early morning on December 26." Turkish fighter jets destroyed eight caves and shelters where PKK members were planning to spend the winter. The TGS said the successful operations demonstrate the Turkish military's ability to operate during heavy winter conditions. Papers report the Peshmerge security forces spokesman said the strike lasted about half an hour in a mountainous border region of Dahuk province. The spokesperson also said there were no casualties because the area had been evacuated.

In an additional statement, the TGS reported that inside Turkey, six PKK terrorists were killed during clashes with security forces in the Kupeli Mountains in Sirnak province.

Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reports White House Spokesman Scott Stanzel told a news briefing the US was "helping Turkey and Iraq counter a destabilizing force." Stanzel added, "we've made it clear to the Turkish government that anything that could lead to escalated concerns, or civilian casualties, causes us concern. The Iraqis don't want terrorists in their country and the PKK is a destabilizing force in the northern part of Iraq, so we continue to work collaboratively with Iraq and Turkey on these issues."

Erdogan and Gul on Turkish Attacks on Northern Iraq

All papers report Prime Minister Erdogan responded harshly to charges that Turkey may have made concessions in exchange for US support in cross-border operations against the PKK in northern Iraq. "The Turkish Prime Minister is not such a dishonorable person who makes concessions in exchange for support," Erdogan told Kanal 7, a private television channel. He continued, "the Turkish military did what was required to combat terrorism within the scope of intelligence-sharing with the US." The PM stressed that

cross-border operations would continue.

"Everything is right on track; Turkey and the US are pleased with the intelligence sharing cooperation," President Abdullah Gul told the press yesterday. He added, "This is the way it should be; we could have come to this point earlier." In response to a question about Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, Gul said there was no obstacle to officially inviting Iraq's President to Ankara. "Talabani is an elected president of a neighboring country. He can come here, and we can go there." Meanwhile, papers report Talabani said on Wednesday that he would "accept with pleasure" an invitation from Turkey.

DTP to Campaign Against Turkish Operations into Northern Iraq
All papers report that on Wednesday, the DTP (Turkey's mainly Kurdish party) adopted a plan for demonstrating against Turkish cross-border operations into northern Iraq. In a statement released after the party meeting, the DTP criticized the state for abandoning democratic efforts and political formulas. It said the PKK was a "political organization" which aims to resolve the Kurdish problem. The statement emphasized that families with children in the mountains were especially worried about Turkish operations. DTP is expected to stage mass protests against the Turkish attacks, including a march from the southeast region to Ankara, according to papers.

Editorial Commentary on Turkey's Kurdish Problem

Mahmut Ovur commented in the mainstream Sabah (12/27): "Turkey is going through an historic social and political process as it seeks to solve the Kurdish problem. As a senior politician says, "the Kurdish problem is a very complicated problem and common sense is required in the resolution of the issue." The resolution of this

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problem will affect Turkey, the region, and the world. There is no single magical formula. The most important thing is to be able to discuss the issue freely. The best solution is to expand democracy and strengthen local administrations. We must do this."

PKK May Increase Attacks in Cities

All papers report that 48 vehicles have been torched in Istanbul over the last 18 days. The Istanbul Governor said security forces are studying camera recordings of Molotov cocktail attacks on cars and have identified potential suspects. Papers report similar incidents were seen in Adana and Hakkari. Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet claims the PKK-affiliated Kurdish Freedom Falcons (TAK) is behind the arson attacks. Analysts expect the PKK to shift to attacks in urban areas in the coming days in order to retaliate against Turkish military operations in northern Iraq.

Kirkuk Referendum Postponed

Sabah, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman and Yeni Safak report the parliament of the Kurdish regional administration on Wednesday approved a six-month delay to the referendum on the fate of the oil-rich city of Kirkuk. The referendum was due to take place by December 31, 2007 under Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution.

Editorial Commentary on Kosovo

Sami Kohen observed in mainstream Milliyet (12/27): "The Kosovo issue has reached a critical point. No consensus was reached during the UN Security Council meetings, Serbia is intensifying its campaign to prevent Kosovo's independence, and Kosovo's newly elected government is prepared to unilaterally declare independence.

The leaders in Kosovo may wait a little while for the UN to make a decision, but, if no decision is reached by March or April, they will declare independence unilaterally. If this happens, more serious problems will develop. For historic, cultural, and political reasons, Turkey is closely interested in Kosovo and supports its independence. Turkey wants Kosovo's status to be resolved by the UN Security Council, but there is no agreement among the council members. If Kosovo declares independency unilaterally, Turkey should follow other countries' actions closely before determining its own stance. There are many reasons for Turkey to be cautious. The contradiction between the principles of 'sovereignty' and 'self-determination' can cause problems for Turkey. Implementing these principles differ from country to country.

Kosovo's independence could establish a precedent on which both Turkish Cypriots and Iraqi Kurds could use to formulate arguments for their own independence. Thus, Turkey must act carefully on the issue."

TV Highlights
NTV

Domestic News

- A 5.5 magnitude earthquake hit Bala in Ankara province around 1:30 a.m. on Thursday. There were no initial reports of serious damage or casualties.
- New Year's Eve celebrations in Istanbul's Taksim Square have been cancelled. The cancellation comes as an effort to show respect to Turkish soldiers killed in operations against the PKK.
- A military hospital in Ankara found Nurettin Demirtas, the detained leader of the pro-Kurdish DTP, to be healthy and unable to prove that he once had tuberculosis. Demirtas is accused of claiming he had tuberculosis in order to avoid his obligatory national military service.
- Turkey has 13 million people living below the poverty line and 600,000 living under the hunger line, according to Turkey Statistics Institute figures.

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International News

- Iraqi Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani and Iraqi President Jalal Talabani met yesterday with US Ambassador Crocker and expressed their anxieties about Turkish military operations in northern Iraq. Crocker promised to convey the leaders' concerns to Turkey.
- Turkey has officially protested to Greece about Greek boats violating Turkish territorial waters.
- Georgia's pro-opposition television channel Imedi suspended broadcasts Wednesday because of the "extremely tense political situation" ahead of the January 5th presidential election.

WILSON